832 to be ends of the twig, actually magic paste, "accidentally" hitting her. They pay for their beer, and leave. The next day, the dabtara takes his skeptical client past the same beer-hut, and lo and behold, the woman calls out an invitation to them, and refuses payment for the beer consumed. The client is now convinced.

This love magic is done secretly because it is considered highly unethical. At least the dabtara is expected to "release" the person "helplessly bewitched" after a while, and not leave the victim in this condition forever.

The dabtara is believed to know, from books on magic, not only the efficacy of barns and plants, but also of animals. His favorite animal is believed to be the chameleon ("zälbabäda"), particularly in love magic, ordered by women. The animal is dried, crushed to powder, and the woman then mixes this with her urine. She must read the formula out loud, containing her name and the name of her husband or the man she wishes to hold against all rivals, then throw the mixture in the air - to be carried by the winds and spirits.

751 The dabtara is believed also to have medicinal magic. Some "careful" men, before going to the adventures of the mead-house ("täj-bet"), go to his house to drink a magic potion to protect them from venereal disease that night.

828 838 When a woman consistently acts like a man, or a man like a woman, it is believed that there is some biological "mistake of God". In the case of a woman, she is likely to be blamed and even insulted, called "mannish" ("wändawände"). This term is used if she acts independent, takes interest only in masculine weapons and activities, and speaks in hard, insubordinate ways. If she is physically a tall, powerful virago, she is called "wändawärad" (lit. male-female), a female with too much

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838 masculinity.

Male transvestites are more often pitied than blamed, for the populace feels even more certain that this is a biological "mistake of God". For, they argue, a woman might try to fool people and assume male prerogatives, but what male would want to surrender the privileges of being a man? He is called "fenafent" (lit. hermaphrodite) and his male organs are believed to be sadly deficient in structure, despite visible male secondary sex characteristics.

This transvestite usually dresses in a woman's embroidered cotton dress or skirt, drapes his toga (shamma) like a woman, likes to work at embroiding the green adornment of a woman's dress, does women's chores, following them at their daily occupations and social gatherings. He dislikes the company of men. Transvestites are relatively rare, and they live as individuals, not forming a society of their own, for they are tolerated. Only their kinfolk are ashamed of them, so they leave them and go to live in another province, (like a tailor unwilling to shame his kin by doing manual labor). Women tolerate a transvestite "like a brother"; men are not jealous of him even though he spends all his time with the womenfolk. Often the transvestite is an unusually sensitive person, quick to anger but intense in his personal likings, sensitive to cultural diffusion from the outside world, expecially those carried by Arab traders; and Muslim Arab traders are often the only male social contacts he tolerates.

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826 in many Europeans, is not considered a mark of beauty either.

186 828 Amhara ethnocentrism rules over their attitudes to the other two major ethnic groups that inhabit Abyssinia: The Coptic Tigrē peoples who are accepted as "ethnic cousins"; and the Muslim and "pagan" Galla, somewhat more African but not negroid, who occupy a middle social position above that of the Shanqalla. The Amhara stereotype as to the personality of these different groups is:

Amhara - "noble", slow of speech, subtle, patient, slow to anger.
Tigrē - shrewd, fast in thought and action, "light" in temper, impatient.
Galla - coarse, shameless (e.g. willing to do manual labor), dull-witted.

An interesting application of this stereotype has arisen in recent years in the discussions about these "national temperaments" by Amhara officers of the modern Ethiopian army, who are concerned with the performance to be expected of the diverse ethnics in battle; important considerations in a country where emotional differences along tribal lines are still strong:

Amhara soldier:

Proud of individual feats; good fighter when his individual pride has been challenged and aroused.
Hates to take orders; difficult to discipline.
Loves to give orders, to act as "great man"; objects to being hurried.
Explosive in temperament, when startled.
Rarely tenaciously energetic; but if he possesses this quality, he is excellent potential leadership material.
"If you treat him as a friend, he thinks he can be your master."

Galla soldier:

Easy to discipline; will take orders and carry them out, without tricks.

186 828 Pride in group, military unit; less emphasis on individual heroism.

Steadier temperament; endurance rather than burst of energy.

"If you treat him as a friend, he will serve you faithfully."

186 779 The religious ethnocentrism of the Amhara is based on their belief that their nation, ruled by the "Solomonic Dynasty", became heir to the "Chosen People" ruled by the House of David, when the latter refused to accept Christ. This is not always clear to the illiterate Amhara, but even he emphasizes this intertwined ethnic and religious principle of his ethnocentrism when he regards the name "Amhara" as signifying both, as he always does.

[304] While the Amhara no longer regards circumcision ("ṗeṗrit") as the symbol of entering the Covenant of the Faith, as does the Old Testament and the Jewish religion, he does follow this procedure a week after birth; and an uncircumcised man ("lembut") is called several insulting names and regarded as almost on a level with African Shanqalla slaves who are also uncircumcised. Circumcision therefore has an intertwined ethnic and religious significance.

671 Amhara legal philosophy, guarded by the church, and expressed therefore in the Geez terminology, analyses the universe as follows:

Natural Law - "ṗabayawi heg"

Man-made Law - (similar to common law) - "ṗahawi heg"

Moral Law (particularly Coptic law) - "ṗabaherya heg" (lit. law from overseas).

186 Ethnocentrism of the Amhara has for several centuries been consciously directed particularly against the attacking Muslims. The "ṗitab" neckcord is believed directly the result of one such purposeful development. Numerous proverbs emphasize the stereotype of the Muslim as the breaker of Amhara religious order as well as social order, and the promoter of lawlessness. Even proverbs such as the following,

827 Seven senses are distinguished by the Amhara, each centered in an organ:

1. Seeing - "ayn" (lit. eye)
2. Hearing - "jor" (ear)
3. Smelling - "afencha" (nose)
4. Tasting - "af" (mouth)
5. Feeling - "ej" (hand)
6. Walking - "ərer" (leg, foot)
7. Sex sense - "abalä ʾar" (lit. male genital organs; polite term).

[51] The sense of taste is noteworthy because the Amhara often does not distinguish bitter ("marara") from sour taste ("ʾəmtata"), which the Westerner does quite readily; the Amhara regards both as "marara" (bitter). However, the Amhara distinguishes a "soft taste" ("tefet"), typified by "bərz" (honeywater).

828 While these seven senses are located physiologically in corresponding organs, psychological states are regarded as located in the belly or the heart, but in different ways than the Westerner might expect.

The belly ("hod") is considered the seat of emotions:

magnanimous emotions - "hod ʾəmaraca" (lit. belly lit up like the moon);

fear - "hod babba" (lit. trembling of the belly);

forgetfulness - "hod ʾəbba" (lit. the belly swallowed it, i.e. lost the thought).

The heart ("leb") is considered the seat of the presence or absence of wisdom:

good judgement - "leb ber" (lit. with a silver heart);

inventive - "leb wälad" (lit. child of the heart; invention);

inactive - "leb mut" (lit. whose heart is dead);

828 imbecility - "leb defen" (lit. whose heart is stopped up).

828 201 Certain emotions are expressed by certain patterned physiological signals, often unconsciously:

Anger may be expressed unconsciously by biting the lower lip, or one's finger. Also by knitting the brow ("fir kosättälä"), from the painful expression that results from drinking the purgative drug kosso, so that a person who perpetually goes about with a frown is said to have a face "as if he had eaten kosso", a "kosso face" ("kosso fit"). Melancholy is expressed in a wrinkled facial expression ("fit chamdadda").

The symbolic significance of the eye has been referred to in a number of connections. Timidity, and respect in the young, is expressed by "turning the eyes to the dust" ("ayn afar"). Impatience, by shifting the glance rapidly ("ärämmätä"), without making impatient body movements which would be "lower class". Directional signals may be consciously given ("ayn ataqqäsä") by eye movements already described; and observation out of the corner of one's eye ("ayn täräämmätä") is a finely developed Amhara subtlety. The sorcerer's eye ("yäsäw ayn" lit. "the man's eye" to avoid the sinister name of the "buda" evil spirit) is greatly feared; particularly when it stares and seems to pop ("ayn täzolaggälä").

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The "left" position is considered the embarassing side ("gera agäbba") (perhaps because the right side is always the honorable, because it would be embarrassing to place someone so that he would have to take food with the left hand which is used in the toilet). Left-handedness is extremely rare. When some undertaking turns out badly, the saying is "The matter has turned left" ("nägär gera hona").

827 Physiological functions carried out without repression are considered low-class and low-ethnic by the Amhara. Only a low-class

827 person would use direct terms relating to certain body functions: "ar" (fecal matter), "shänna" (he urinated), etc. Polite circumscription is well developed. But the actual carrying out of basic body functions is merely channelled, not repressed, even in "polite society". Farting, e.g., which is almost inevitable after consuming the daily "qolo" (roast peas or barley), is channelled as expressed in the following proberb:

[539] "The Abyssinian is clever;
bowing low (before the great man), he (silently) farts".

Spitting is the inevitable result of masticating the end of the twig used as a toothbrush; but it is not nearly as voluminous as the low-class spitting ("tiq alä", or "entef alä", both alliterations) of the Sudanese ex-slaves (Barya) and Muslim Abyssinians who hold a wad of tobacco between lower lip and gum, chew, and spit.

●828 157 In the conceptualization of human personalities, the Amhara take subject matter also from physiological functions and from the ethnic and other divisions of the class structure:

The Rustic (esp. peasant):
"balagär" (lit. man of the rural country), also "balage". Unpolished, impolite, vulgar.
"wetter" - ignorant person who asks embarassing questions to "inflate his own belly".

The Simple-minded: "yawah" - simple, good, modest, honest, frank, sincere.
"wedeqät" - (lit. young bull) - simpleton, who causes damage without meaning to; e.g. who cannot hold his tongue.

The Fool: "dongwero" (lit. deaf; deaf-mute) Stupid person whose mind nothing seems to penetrate.

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"ärrsässa" - proud person, e.g. who does not reply though called twice.

"afa adatar" (who let slip from the mouth) what he didn't mean to reveal. Also "sat ala" (let slip) like ax, when working.

The Immature Personality: "gäbre hasanat" (lit. Slave of the nursling stage).

The Effeminate Male: "gärtalla" - a delicate man, who cannot argue aggressively even if there is good reason for it.

"bukkan" - a fat, short male, who cannot walk long distances or march into battle; hence, a coward.

The Insane: "enäf" - idiot, (also insult for a fool).

"wäfattana" - violently insane person (insult for a quarrelsome person).

"wedegat" - epileptic, who falls down.

"sbd" - person who runs amok (believed possessed by "zar yen" evil spirit).

The Clever Person: "bala ej" - who is skillful with his hands, e.g. a surgeon ("wogasha").

"däleddel säw" - poised person, who can face and solve some direct, physical problem.

"tebäb" or "täbib" - skilled craftsman, trained artisan (includes the respectable dabtara scribe as well as ethnic smiths and sorcerers).

The Wise Person: "Bala näker" - Man of counsel, prudent, judicious.

"Awaqi" (lit. knower) - one who has accumulated knowledge with or without books.

"chemmet" - calm, softspoken, modest, tranquil, sedate, serious.

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"galeb" - one who shines with intelligence;

"galbam" - Person full of reason, discretion, intellectual beauty.

812 It is clear from the last two personalities that a distinction is made between the merely clever (e.g. in material things) and the wise person. Wisdom is stressed in numerous proverbs:

539 "A king who has no wise counsellor,
not one year will he reign".

Many Amhara desirous of reputation, emulate the Biblical wisdom of King Solomon, a wise judge whom "no one could fool". Anecdotes of this type of wisdom are told far and wide, of kings and of rulers of provinces. Even at present, some of these anecdotes are told of rulers still living, including of Emperor Haile Selassie. The following two anecdotes, which may well be factual, are told in Gondar about Ras Imru, who ruled as governor-general of Begemdir province just after the liberation from Italian occupation, when banditry was a major problem:

539 812 1. Two bandits accused of robbery-murder were placed in separate confinement. They had refused to confess, and the time of the murder could not be ascertained. One bandit was taken to the place of the crime, on orders of Ras Imru, and told that his partner had confessed; then, that the time of the crime had been such-and-such. Eager to argue against such an error, the bandit momentarily overlooked the fact that by correcting the time element he was giving himself away. Whereupon both were convicted and hanged.

2. One day, while riding through the market, Ras Imru was halted when a woman threw herself before his horse, shouting "abyet", the traditional appeal of the oppressed. She accused one of Ras Imru's soldiers of having consumed a large pitcher of milk she had for sale, without payment. The soldier denied it, and there were no witnesses

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with the saint for whom it has been named, and personalized. The extent to which the ark is regarded as human is shown by the following remark of a peasant who looked at the picture of a church on a TAT card and explained: "When the ark has been given incense, it will be happy. . . . If this church is given a new roof, the ark will be very happy and give *injarā* to the people."

The saints and the *tābot* which represent them are the objects of much veneration and prayer. They figure so prominently in the Amhara's outlook that at times they appear to be on a par with *Egziābhēr* himself. Two differences may be noted, however. The saints do not take the initiative in interfering in human affairs, as does *Egziābhēr*, but intervene only when appealed to. Their function, moreover, is that of protecting and healing spirits; it is not their portion to administer the punishments which *Egziābhēr* inflicts on those who disobey the religious laws, though they may mete out punishment to someone who breaks a vow he has made to them.

Malevolent spirits, on the other hand, do intervene in human affairs without being invited. Of the evil spirits, the devil—known as *Diabolos*, *Sayṭān*, or *Agannent*, which are names of different spirits to the learned but counted the same in the peasant's mind—is the most powerful. He is imagined as a dark, Negroid type, the least favored sort of racial stock in Ethiopia. He dwells in deep waters, woods, and caves, and likes to roam about at noon and at midnight, especially near dirty places. Amhara avoid going near a lake or pool known to harbor the devil, for fear of being pulled in and drowned. They likewise stay away from dirty places at noon, for fear that he will make them sick. The devil brings epileptic fits. He tries to push people into fire. He also tries to harm human beings by tempting them to some misdeed—stealing, murder, getting drunk—and then have them suffer the consequences. Finally, when the human soul appears for judgment after death, he strives to gain possession of the soul and put it into the fire. Sometimes he is pictured as chewing the souls he manages to obtain.

Despite his inimical gestures toward the human race, the devil is respected as well as feared, for he has much power. Many peasants pray to him for this reason. In time of sickness some choose *Sayṭān*, rather than (or in addition to] *Giyorgis* or *Māryām*, as the one to whom they pray and make promises. On New Year's Day, Christmas, and Easter, prayers to *Sayṭān* are surreptitiously repeated in many quarters. One of these prayers runs: "My lord, bring me through the year. Guard me. If you keep me this year in peace and bring me through the year, I will give you more." Certain individuals are on especially good terms with the devil. They pray to him often, and he visits them from time to time and does favors for them; they are his "friends." When such a person dies, his son often continues the relationship.

Another kind of spirit producing ill effects is the *zār*. *Zār* spirits are of

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many kinds: they may be male or female, Christian or Muslim, educated or unschooled, mischievous or somber. *Zār* are depicted as resembling the handsome, light-complexioned Abyssinians. They are not necessarily evil: sometimes a person is inspired by the sound of *zār* singing far off in the woods to add a new song to the local lore. But they are the great carriers of physical and mental illness. Many of the contagious diseases in Abyssinia, like typhus and smallpox, are referred to as "*zār* sicknesses." Above all, the *zār* is the bringer of seizures. When a *zār* lands on somebody's back the victim may go into a trance, succumb to melancholia, or break out in hysteria. Women are most often subjected to fits caused by *zār*—usually by male *zār*, who perform some kind of magical coitus with them and try to compete with their husbands. When a freak is born to a woman, it is often attributed to the malicious effect of a *zār* jealous of her husband.

Though some kinds of *zār* only desist from molesting their victims through constant propitiations, others can be won over to serve as powerful protecting spirits. Thus an initial discomfort can be turned into a permanent advantage, offering the erstwhile victim magical protection and, as one student has suggested, affording women a temporary escape from their depressed social status through the companionship and opportunities for self-expression found in associations of *zār* "patients."[6]

Human beings with supernatural powers are of two kinds: those who manipulate the spirits and practice magic, and those who are themselves possessed. The possessed are called *ṭayb* or *budā*. *Ṭayb* (or *ṭabib*) in its original sense means "manual worker," but it has acquired the connotation of "one with the evil eye," the primary meaning of *budā*. By looking at someone the *budā* or *ṭayb* "drinks his blood" through the magic power of his evil eye. The victim will first feel a severe headache and fatigue, then show hysterical frenzy, and finally intestinal cramps. His fingers will be clenched around his thumbs, a sign that the *budā* has grasped the thumbs and does not want anyone to see him taking his "food" from the victim. If the victim is not cured he will eventually waste away and die.

The *budā* is helpless to check his malevolent power, and if he enters the home of a friend who is not a *budā* he will shout ahead to get the children out of the way for fear he might unwittingly infect them. People who eat pork are thought invulnerable against the evil eye, the pork in their systems serving as a kind of antibody against the infection. Potters and metalsmiths have been kept in a low caste position in Abyssinia partly because of the belief that such artisans inherit this evil power along with their craft from their parents. It is important in selecting a spouse for one's child to make sure that there is no *budā* blood in the family, and to be called a *budā* or *ṭayb* is one of the more serious insults.

The Amhara peasant has many beliefs about the malevolent beings in his

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Still another invidious distinction of considerable importance in the Amhara outlook is that between the "big man" (*ṭilliq saw*) and the commoner (*terā saw*). "Bigness" may be measured in terms of political power, economic wealth, ecclesiastical status, or any combination thereof. Though the peasant frequently has little affection for the big man, he customarily treats him with the greatest show of deference. No matter how unfamiliar a big man may be or from what part of the country he comes, the Amhara peasant sees him as entitled to unquestioning courtesy and obeisance. Analogous distinctions discriminate between the wealthy (*hābtām*) and the poor (*dehā*), and between the genteel (*ṣhawā*) and the rude (*bālagē*).

Yet if the Amhara takes a dim view of women, youth, and poor folk, as well as non-Amhara and non-Christians, he suffers from no illusions about homo sapiens at his best—unless they are dark illusions. The generic word for "man" in Amharic, *saw*, is the subject of a number of negative associations and idiomatic uses.[12] At its worst, the word is found in an idiom that signifies the evil eye (*ya-saw ayn*), literally: the "eye of man" (or, more idiomatically, "the eye of others"). At its best, when used to signify a fully formed human being, the word *saw* characteristically appears in the plaintive saying, *Saw ʾallam* ("there is no human being"); in other words, an individual who fully embodies the concept of humanity does not exist. In general, one may say that the Amhara's view of human nature is dominated by his perception of man's inherent aggressiveness and untrustworthiness.

The Amhara believes that unformed human nature is poor raw material, and that without strict punishment throughout childhood a person will grow up to be rude and offensive toward others. As an adult, moreover, he must constantly be kept in check. The rationale commonly given for the extensive schedule of fasting is that man's nature is wicked, and only by weakening himself in this manner will he be turned away from some act of aggression against others.

The Amharic concept of *ṭegābaññā* illustrates this view. *Ṭegābaññā* literally carries the meaning of one who has been sated with food and drink, but is normally taken to mean someone who begins to insult and pick fights with others. In their use of this and related words the Amhara express the belief that aggression is the usual consequence of being sated. Insubordinate behavior on the part of a servant or political appointee is usually explained as a result of his having been too well fed. "When a peasant gets sated he hits with his stick. . . " is the first line of a number of couplets I collected among rural Amhara. The specific effect of drinking alcoholic beverages is believed to release, not Eros, but the aggressive instincts. An Amharic proverb about *ṭallā* states this directly: "One [glass] whets the appetite; two quenches it; three heats one up; four makes one quarrel; five brings fighting; six causes killing." Contrary to the view that world peace depends chiefly on filling

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people everywhere with plenty of food and drink, the Amhara outlook would see in such a condition the prelude to mass civil war.

The Good Life

When asked what is their chief goal in life, Amhara peasants frequently respond with the expression *sarto mablāt* ("having worked, to eat"). This response says many things. It reflects their constant preoccupation with the need to eat. It suggests that having enough to feed oneself, one's family, and one's guests is the farthest horizon toward which the peasants normally aspire. It also implies that in order to eat one should work by the sweat of his brow; it praises independence and self-reliance.

In raising their children Amhara peasants consciously strive to prepare them for making a living on their own. It is shameful to be dependent on others. It is worse yet to steal. Parents instill in their children a dread of becoming a thief. To be called *lēbā*, or "thief," is—except when in fun—a terrible insult. Stealing is felt to be somewhat worse than murder. In a survey of forty rural Amhara youths asked to name the six worst actions in the eyes of the local populace, eighty-five per cent mentioned stealing, and often under two or three different names; while only sixty per cent mentioned killing, and this answer was sometimes qualified as "killing without justification" or "killing by means of poison." One peasant commented on this question by observing, "You never kill a man unless he has done something wrong; but stealing, that is the sin."

The concept of *sarto mablāt* further implies that work is good. It expresses admiration for the industrious farmer. A majority of our TAT respondents preferred that one among twenty-five cards which showed a peasant hard at work in the fields. Agricultural work is idealized in Abyssinia because it promotes the virtues of independence and honesty. If fate concurs, it may even lead to wealth. And in any case it trains and shows one to be *guabaz*, a hero in man's work, for it is no small feat to toil from dawn till moonlight in the busy seasons or half a day on an empty stomach on fasting days.

Nevertheless, those observers are not wholly wrong who speak, like Griaule, of "the little penchant for work among the people."[18] Status considerations keep the Amhara from making a fetish of work as such. He looks down on the work of artisans because of their association with the evil eye. He avoids when possible unskilled manual labor, for traditionally that has been relegated to slaves or servants from "inferior" tribes. Work for wages is likewise deemed undignified. If one must work for someone else, it should be in the context of a more personal relationship—as a retainer, for example. Women are especially sensitive about this and much prefer to serve a man as his temporary wife than as a salaried housekeeper. Finally, although the peasant aspires "to eat, having worked," he is not wholly impervious to the appeal of the more

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in time of crisis, but otherwise occupy an inconspicuous place in the Amhara's world. His prayers and oaths, his calendar, and his simple precautions against evil spirits are matters of habit. He has no driving concern with the supernatural in his daily life.

In the human realm, collective symbols and endeavors are not a major focus of attention. The demands of family, church, and state are, like the seasons, familiar and unproblematic; like nature, these institutions call for simple adjustment. On the personal side, sexuality plays a modest part in the Amhara's outlook. Sex as such is not talked about much. It is enjoyed, beneath the surface of social life, with little fuss or problems other than the usual practical ones.

By contrast, the phenomenon of man's aggression is seen, discussed, pondered, and worried about to a considerable extent. The Amhara sees himself and his fellows as prone to aggression as soon as hunger no longer checks them or festivity has raised their spirits. He is wary of the stranger, forever fearful that the unfamiliar *saw* may attack with the evil eye. He sees the outsider as bent on aggrandizement, constantly plotting to seize his patch of earth. How to keep man's potential for aggression under control is a recurrent question in Amhara experience. The Amhara considers a pitiless regime of fasting to be the only way he can keep his hostile impulses subdued, and believes that children must not be spared the rod lest they be rude and aggressive. He withholds esteem from young men on the grounds that they are prone to throw insults and pick fights. On the other hand, he sets up occasions, like the whipping battles on Buhē and the rough play and insulting at Christmas, when the acting out of aggressive impulses is controlled through being carried on in a legitimate context. He idealizes the men of peace, the priest and the elder, for their work in putting moral pressure on people to observe the fasts and to reconcile quarrels.

At the same time, the Amhara peasant is greatly concerned about ways and means of improving his capacity for aggression, both through the technique of litigation and through violent means. He trains his sons to be brave and to fight well, and chants with enthusiasm the inflaming martial verses of *shĭllalā*. He idealizes the fighter as much if not more than the man of peace. Litigants, hunters, and warriors keep vital the Amhara ideal of masculinity, which every peasant must cultivate in order to protect his land and his honor.

The Amhara peasant is simultaneously preoccupied with the stimulation and the control of aggressive behavior. The previously mentioned conflict of norms regarding violence is perhaps the chief area of moral conflict in his thinking about the good life. Though nature, God, and other aspects of man's life occupy much of his attention from time to time, it appears that the phenomenon of human aggression dominates the confrontation between the Amhara peasant and the objects of his experience.

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garded as more important than human effort in attaining one's goals. "If a man works hard, he may remain poor. If he does not work hard, he may become wealthy. The outcome is due to fate." The peasant is discouraged from determined efforts to make changes in his environment because of the feeling that no matter what he does, God's disposition is what really counts.

In addition to feeling that innovation is ineffectual, the Amhara peasant tends to feel that it is immoral. Reverence for fathers and forefathers is, we observed, a key element of the Amhara ethos. This patriarchal sentiment informs the Amhara's defense not only of his land and his religion, but of the procedures of daily living as well. It is not good to deviate from the familiar ways of doing things because they, too, have been handed down by "our fathers"; this is a phrase which interlards Amharic conversation.

A number of other, more specific, norms have had the effect of discouraging inventiveness among the Amhara. Experimentation with matter was inhibited by the disdain for puttering about with one's hands—doing anything, that is, similar to the activities of the socially dejected artisans and slaves. Hence the peasant retains the same rudimentary tools for wresting a subsistence from nature that he has used for millennia, and searches about the woods for a properly shaped piece of wood rather than improve his art of carpentry.[16] Experimentation with ideas was inhibited by the anti-intellectual cast of Amhara culture, which discredits the pursuit of ideas for their own sake. Ideas pertain either to the unchangeable mysteries, as expressed in the religious literature, or to the unchanging verities of human experience, as expressed in folk proverbs. Ideas are not entertained as "adventure," to use Whitehead's term—as a source of novel possibilities in life, a guide rather than a justification of custom.

Two factors are especially significant in accounting for the Amhara peasant's reluctance to use ideas drawn from experience and insight for the purpose of reshaping custom. One is the fact that the primary medium for the elaboration and dissemination of such ideas—the written word—was affected by a number of restrictions in Amhara culture.[17]* As a consequence, although writing has been known in Abyssinia for two millennia, it had almost never

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* The act of writing was considered to be inherently shameful: like any manual activity other than farming and fighting, writing was regarded as degrading work, the business of scribes whose status was thereby not much higher than that of potters and metalsmiths. Only a small percentage of the clergy learned to write, and those who did were rarely adept at it. The products of writing, moreover, were deemed either too sacred or too nefarious to warrant giving laymen easy access to their medium. Script belonged above all else to the realm of scripture. The awe felt for holy writs was a deterrent against using that medium for other than devotional purposes. The chief private use of writing was for the magic formulas of the *dabtarā*, another connection with the supernatural that discouraged its lay practice. The *dabtarā*'s art served injurious as well as beneficent purposes, and the fear that those who learned to write might stumble onto potent phrases was reason for restricting that skill to a small group of the initiated.

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ment. Of particular interest here is the fact that these officials have frequently been condemned in total terms for their alleged "selfishness" and "hypocrisy." Indeed, one of the outstanding characteristics of the modern-educated is a highly moralistic disposition which leads to a constant evaluation, and unmasking, of everyone within the broad orbit of Ethiopian political life in morally uncompromising terms.

The sources of this disposition are complex and not fully to be explained here. One factor would seem to be the ascendance of a concern for rationality and its related insistence on integrity, in opposition to the traditional patterns of deviousness and equivocation symbolized by wax and gold. Another would seem to be a growing Rousseauan concern for the "natural rights" of the people, and the related view of the powers supporting the *ancien régime* as selfishly and hypocritically depriving the people of these rights. What the consequences of this disposition may be is a question of greater urgency. For it leads to the insistence on purity of heart as the essential political virtue, a demand which necessarily results in demoralization of public life and political fanaticism.[21]

While this sort of disposition is natural to the situation of the modern-educated, hence not simply to be wished away, it is clearly out of touch with the traditional Amhara mentality. Insofar as the modern-educated may seek alternatives to a purist, sentimental, and somewhat hysterical approach to politics, they may find themselves nourished by contact, through personal communication or through the medium of literature, with the "cooler" approach of the Amhara peasant.

A feature of Amhara peasant culture discussed earlier in this chapter is the centrality of its orientation to man and to the phenomenon of human aggression in particular. To know the Amhara peasant at all closely is to appreciate how cautious he is about the intentions of others. He does not assume that he can count on others, though they may make promises. Before engaging in any secular transaction, such as lending money to a neighbor, entering into litigation, or taking on a servant, he insists on securing a guarantor (*wäss*) who agrees to make good for damages caused by the man he is backing. He does not assume that others may be benevolently disposed toward him; he suspects that behind every protestation of admiration and fealty lurks some quest for personal advantage. He does not assume that superior social status entails superior moral worth. Wryly commenting on his ambivalence toward superiors toward whom he shows such deference, he describes his posture as one of "bowing in front, and passing gas in the rear." In short, he is on guard at all times, coping with the presumed selfishness and hypocrisy of others and pursuing his own interests in a very sober and manipulative way.

At the same time the Amhara peasant's low estimate of man's potential does

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*883 men and outstanding commoners in the vicinity of the royal court. But with
871 the importation of hundreds of foreign teachers, the establishment of an ex-
178 tensive system of secondary schools and colleges, and the provision of economic support for thousands of post-elementary students, a real structural change came about. Although the school system remained completely subordinate to the throne, it introduced a number of processes that had a dynamic of their own.

*883 As we have seen, these new socialization processes have subjected the
121 modern adolescents to many sorts of conflict and strain. They have been
178 placed in conflict with their parents, and hence within themselves, on the basic issues of work and, particularly, marriage. They have been subjected to the simultaneous appeal of traditional and modern patterns in virtually all aspects of culture. They have been forced to make choices in numerous areas, while their traditional counterparts have customarily been prevented from making any kind of choice at all.

It might seem that such a situation would breed a troubled generation, distraught and disoriented, knowing what we do about the psychological hazards of rapid culture change. And indeed, among the modern adolescents of the fifties, one might find classical cases of anomie and identity diffusion, boys who confess, "Nothing seems worthwhile to me . . . I am confused, being brought up as I was on the traditional beliefs without questioning and then suddenly being forced to ask questions," or, "The problem of choosing the work I should go into is my only real problem right now, but because of it I find it hard to make decisions about anything. If this suffering is the price of freedom, I am not sure it is worth the price."

Such cases, however, were the exception, not the rule. Most of the students were working hard to get ahead in the world or enjoying their newly acquired freedom and camaraderie. Almost all our respondents had ready answers concerning the sort of work they want to go into, and what they
• [828] would do if they could have any wish granted. Comparing themselves with their elders, they presented a positive self-image. They regarded themselves as more "civilized," "well built," and "generous" than their parents' generation, albeit somewhat lazier and less polite; and in comparison with Ethiopians a decade older, saw themselves as "better educated," "more clever," "more adventurous," and better able to "enjoy life." Nearly all of them (92 per cent) said that they felt either "enthusiastic" or "hopeful" about their
[181] personal future. So one could characterize the Ethiopian post-elementary students of the fifties as relatively buoyant, clear-headed, self-confident, and enjoying their situation of culture contact and change far more than suffering it. How may this be explained?

[643] One great source of their strength was a sense of dependence on the Emperor. As founder of the Ethiopian school system, Haile Selassie has

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191 155 rhythm and rhyme of words as an epicure with a palatable viand or intoxicating old wine. . . . Like the infant, his affective state can only be pacified through a rhythmical expression of pleasurable sounds.[8]

The Amharic language itself registers a certain sensibility to the nature of poetry as an oral outlet. Agreeable and pleasing language is characterized in Amharic by the same word which is used to characterize particularly pleasing food: "*tāfata*" ("it is sweet"). The introduction to the *Chronicles* of Emperor Galawdewos is but the literary embellishment of a type of statement which [589] could be made by any Amhara:

> We commence here this beautiful narrative, of more pleasing taste to the mouth . . . than honey and sugar, which will bring pleasure to those who hear it and will give, to those who understand it, a joy like that given by song and wine.[9]

155 828 [826] The incorporation of knowledge no less than the enjoyment of words is conceived in explicitly oral terms in Amharic. The stomach is regarded as the seat of wisdom, and in the language of schoolboys the diligent student is one who has thoroughly "drunk his lesson." The experiencing of one's school as an Alma Mater is probably quite intense; as one tenth-grade student wrote in a contribution to his school newspaper, "Oh! Mother School! There is nothing like school! As a mother feeds her children with milk and bread, so does a school feed her children, the pupils, with education."[10]

155 261 514 527 [575] [794] Eating and drinking for their own sake, beyond what is required for nutrition, form perhaps the most obvious medium for oral erotism, and one that is cultivated to a notable degree among the Amhara. Feasting is called for on every possible occasion—christenings, funerals, and memorial services, as well as engagements, weddings, and annual holidays. The chief purpose of the only voluntary association in traditional Amhara society, the religious fraternal association known as the *māhebar,* is to eat and drink in honor of a certain saint on his day every month. The duration of any large celebration is said to depend on how long the food and drink last; successful ones go on for three days. Linguistic usage stresses the oral function on such occasions. One "eats at," rather than attends, a christening party; one "drinks in," rather than belongs to, a *māhebar;* one expects to "eat at," rather than dance at, somebody's wedding. The very word for Easter, "*Fāsiqā*," literally means "great feast."

155 261 264 The activity of eating is colored by a number of conventions which express its great emotional significance. The mood at mealtime is supposed to be deeply serious. Food is to be masticated aloud, indicating a total involvement with the task at hand. Not to let others hear one chewing, like eating by oneself, also is taken to imply greed. The usual obligation to stand when somebody enters the room is waived when one is eating. "Grain is king," says an

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phenomena, traits inherited from earlier traditions and retained through inertia, and that no psychological processes need be invoked in describing them. But this argument fails to explain why, in view of the harmful physical and political consequences of their excessive fasting, the Amhara should have developed in the direction of increasing rather than alleviating their fasting burden. For Abyssinia's commitment to fasting was well known by her enemies, and used to her disadvantage: Ahmad Grāñ took advantage of the country's weakness during Lent to launch his attacks at that time year after year, and the Galla hordes who succeeded him did likewise. The argument also fails to explain why the taboos on pork and tobacco, and the fasting prescriptions, should have been pushed to the forefront of Amhara Christian consciousness. For observance of these mores is considered the very crux of Christianity by traditional Amhara. Amhara often refer to fasting as the most important part of their religion. If a person fails to fast, his relatives are technically absolved from the duty of providing memorial feasts for him when he dies; let his soul wander in darkness! Fasting more than anything else protects them from the devil and enhances the likelihood of their entering paradise.

Apart from their adherence to these cultural norms, moreover, the Amhara also manifest anxiety regarding oral gratification at the purely psychological level. There is, on the one hand, a constant undertone of concern among Amhara about getting enough to eat, even under favorable agricultural conditions. On the other hand, there is a good deal of concern about the consequences of eating too much. There is much worry among the Amhara about the dangers of excessive eating at the conclusion of periods of fasting. There is also the fear that if one indulges in eating and drinking he may become uncontrollably hostile, a fear expressed in the previously mentioned notion of *ţegābaññā*. These and other forms of anxiety about oral gratification are expressed in a number of folk tales, in which eating, drinking, singing, talking, or simply opening one's mouth result in such misfortunes as sickness, loss of property, and death.[20] A similar theme appears in the epic *Glory of Kings:* the Queen of Sheba, in satisfying her thirst by drinking from a goblet which King Solomon had placed in her bedroom, thereby forfeited her right to immunity from his amorous desires and was obliged to yield to his embrace.

Ambivalence regarding oral aggressiveness, finally, may be discerned in the Amhara's anxiety about being eaten, an anxiety which should probably be interpreted as an externalization of unacceptable oral-sadistic impulses. Traditional Amhara have a morbid fear of being "eaten" by those with the evil eye, *budā* and *ţayb*, men who are believed to destroy their victim by invisibly sucking his blood. It is largely because of this fear that children are kept away from strangers. Similar projections appear in connection with other well-known figures in Amhara culture. Another fearful object is the *çhirāq*, a giant

*753 measles, and smallpox), whooping cough, and occasionally
[843] mumps. Pre-natal contagion, in which a homonculus receives a paternal bašiyta or a fetus contracts a maternal bašiyta via the blood nutriment, is responsible for childhood syphilis and ayni tila. Rabies is the only example of animal-human contagion, the bašiyta being carried by the dog's saliva. Neither likift nor the causation of jaundice through contact with bat urine are examples of tolalafiy, since in neither case is the disease agent itself a victim of the ailment.

*753 The body's normal functioning is also disrupted by
825 deviations from acceptable limits of diet, physical acti-
*827 vity, and emotion. Digestive wosfat, for example, are
[192] angered by insufficient food, or food which is stale (injera bread), spoiled (soured talla beer), or improperly prepared (wot stew lacking the customary cayenne). In return, the wosfat rise up to bite the stomach itself, causing pain, bloat, and diarrhea; if these conditions persist, the wosfat will chew their way to the heart, pro-
*753 ducing great local pain, fever, and lassitude. Exces-
827 sive physical exertion is associated with local com-
[828] plaints: Extended walking may dislocate a jimat from its assigned channel (sprain); prolonged weeping can cloud the eye (trachoma and cataracts); extended and arduous thinking produces confusion; much hard labor results in arthritic and rheumatoid complaints. Intense emotions

*753 827 • 828 exercise the heart severely and, if prolonged, portend serious consequences. Deep sorrow, fear, and anger---particularly in response to personal insult---stoke the cardiac fires, whose heat radiates to the lungs where it produces coughing and difficulty in breathing, to the stomach whose aroused wosfat cause pain and vomiting, and to the blood whose smoldering darkens the complexion. Under these circumstances, the heart cannot function effectively for long; clear thinking becomes difficult and, as the heart dissipates its energies, the body trembles. If these effects continue unabated, cardiac deterioration leads to madness and, eventually, death.

*753 82 *[192] Two illnesses are explainable only epidemiologically: The hot, Sudanic borderlands are associated with malaria, and the damp, cold Semyen heights are linked to a "wind disease" (yinifas basiyta), characterized by shortness of breath, chest pains, excessive saliva, fatigue, and joint pain.

*753 Lastly, the appearance of certain ailments is related to prodromal complaints: Epilepsy proceeds madness; poxes before blindness; catarrh leads to diptheria; syphilis results in blindness, rheumatism, miscarriage, chronic back pain, weak heart (chronic fatigue), and scrofula; measles brings deafness. Although it is frequently assumed that the prodromal essence (basiyta)